

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 19895

TEL AVIV FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UR
SUBJ: SOVIET DISSIDENT REACTION TO THE BUKOVSKIY-CORVALAN EX-
CHANGE

1. SUMMARY. THE SOVIET DISSIDENT COMMUNITY HAS GREETED THE
NEWS OF THE EXCHANGE OF CORVALAN AND BUKOVSKIY WITH A MIXTURE
OF ASTONISHMENT AND PLEASURE:ASTONISHMENT THAT THE USSR
SHOULD HAVE ALLOWED ITSELF TO BE A PARTY TO SUCH A
TRANSACTION, PLEASURE THAT BUKOVSKIY SHOULD HAVE BEEN
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RELEASED. END SUMMARY.

2. THERE IS NO CONSENSUS AMONG MOSCOW DISSIDENTS AS
TO WHY THE EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE; THE MOST COMMON VIEW
IS THAT THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES DECIDED TO GIVE BREZHNEV'S
70TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS A SPECIAL FILLIP BY INCLUDING

THE NEWS OF THE RELEASE OF CORVALAN IN THE FESTIVITIES. (CORVALAN HAS NOT YET APPEARED ON SOVIET TELEVISION, ALTHOUGH HIS THANKS TO BREZHNEV AND BIRTHDAY GREETINGS WERE CARRIED IN THE PRESS.) A SMALL GROUP OF DISSIDENTS FEELS THAT THE RELEASE IS INTENDED AS A SIGNAL TO PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER, AS HE BEGINS HIS ADMINISTRATION, THAT THE USSR IS WILLING TO BE MORE LENIENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS.

3. SEVERAL OF THE DISSIDENT SOURCES TO WHOM WE TALKED FELT THAT IT WAS PRESSURE ON THE CPSU FROM FOREIGN COMMUNIST PARTIES THAT CAUSED THE RELEASE. THIS REASONING ASSUMES THAT THE LEADERS OF CPS IN COUNTRIES WHERE THE PARTY IS BANNED WANTED THE CPSU TO DEMONSTRATE, AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE, ITS CONCERN FOR THEIR LIVES AND WELL-BEING SHOULD THEY BE ARRESTED. A VARIANT OF THIS LOGIC ASSERTS THAT IT IS THE SOVIETS THEMSELVES WHO ARE TRYING TO REASSURE THESE LEADERS THAT NO EFFORTS WILL BE SPARED TO SECURE THEIR RELEASE SHOULD THEY BE ARRESTED.

4. EXCEPT FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CHAPTER, ALL DISSIDENTS ASSUME THAT PRESSURE FROM WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION PLAYED ONLY A MINOR, ALTHOUGH CERTAINLY USEFUL ROLE, IN THE SOVIET DECISION.

5. OUR SOURCES ALL EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY ANY PRICE AT ALL FOR CORVALAN'S RELEASE, BOTH BECAUSE HE WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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BE MUCH MORE USEFUL TO THEM AS A MARTYR ROTTING IN A CHILEAN JAIL THAN LIVING IN EXILE IN THE USSR, AND ALSO BECAUSE OF THE PRECEDENT WHICH THE EXCHANGE SETS. AS ONE OF OUR SOURCES SAID: "WE NEED TO GET COUNTRIES EVERYWHERE TO ARREST THE LOCAL CP CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND OFFER TO RELEASE THEM FOR OUR DETAINEES."

6. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF GENUINE PLEASURE THAT THE EXCHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE AND THE BUKOVSKIY HAS BEEN RELEASED. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS VERY MUCH A TENDENCY IN DISSIDENT CIRCLES HERE TO REGARD THE EXCHANGE AS A ONE-SHOT AFFAIR. WHILE KOVALEV IS MENTIONED BY SOME AS A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE FOR A SECOND EXCHANGE, MOST OF OUR SOURCES SEE FEW OTHER POSSIBILITIES AMONG SOVIET POLITICAL PRISONERS. TWO SOURCES HAVE ALREADY NOTED THAT ONE POSSIBLE RESPONSE TO THE BUKOVSKIY RELEASE WOULD BE A CHANGE IN THE TREATMENT THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES GIVE TO DISSIDENTS. IN THE FUTURE,

DISSIDENTS MIGHT WELL BE SENTENCED TO PERIODS OF EXILE
RATHER THAN TO PRISON. THIS PROCEDURE (TVERDOKHLEBOV
IS AN EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE CURRENTLY IN EXILE) WOULD
ENABLE THE AUTHORITIES TO DENY THAT A GIVEN DISSIDENT
IS IN PRISON AND IS THEREFORE A CANDIDATE FOR POSSIBLE
EXCHANGE. IT ALSO ENABLES RELATIVELY LONG SENTENCES
OF EXILE TO BE PASSED, WHILE AVOIDING THE PUBLIC
OPINION FUROR IN THE WEST WHICH WOULD ACCOMPANY A
PRISON SENTENCE. IN EXILE, OF COURSE, ONE CAN BE
ALMOST AS EFFECTIVELY CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE
WORLD AS IF ONE WERE IN PRISON.
MATLOCK

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